

VZCZCXYZ0024
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHAK #2791 1361232
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 161232Z MAY 06
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5642

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 002791

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/15/2016

TAGS: OVIP OTRA AMGT ASEC PREL PGOV TU

SUBJECT: TURKISH PM ERDOGAN AND FM GUL ON VISITS TO THE U.S.

REF: A. A) ANKARA 2047

¶B. B) USDEL SECRETARY PARTO 17 5/10/06

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ROSS WILSON FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶11. (c) Summary: Turkish PM Erdogan informed Ambassador May 15 that he now wants to proceed with plans to visit the US and meet President Bush in early June. FM Gul's travel plans are unclear. Erdogan and Gul said the Turkish government will approach us on specifics shortly. End Summary.

¶12. (c) Erdogan reminded Ambassador that he had mentioned his interest in visiting Washington and meeting with President Bush to Rep. Robert Wexler during a meeting in early April and again to Secretary Rice during her Ankara stopover on April 25 (reftels). Erdogan said that he now would like to move to arrange this travel, preferably for early June. He noted plans in the interim to visit Egypt and Germany, among other places. He said that we could shortly expect specific information on time frames that would work for him and would appreciate an early response. When asked about possibilities later in the summer, Erdogan replied that July or August would be too late. Erdogan said he would like specifically to discuss Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Israeli-Palestinian issue, though we doubt his agenda would be limited to these items.

¶13. (c) Ambassador said he had mentioned to USG officials Erdogan's interest in visiting the US following CODEL Wexler, and he noted Secretary Rice's expression of interest in a US visit, as well. He said we look forward to specifics and to seeing how we could use any Washington meetings to advance our common interests.

¶14. (c) Ambassador also discussed this twice on May 15 with FM Gul. During a meeting early in the day on another subject, Gul indicated that he has now been cleared by his doctors for travel by air. He said he thought Erdogan still wanted him to go first to the US, but he needed to discuss this with the PM. Gul said that he knows that visits at UNGA time are problematic and thought he should come before this. In a brief evening exchange, Gul told Ambassador that perhaps Erdogan will go earlier or the two might go together and that we could expect official word from the Turkish side soon.

¶15. (SBU) Erdogan has spoken publicly in recent days on his interest in visiting the US to meet with the President and discuss relevant issues. Papers have also noted that he may attend the graduation of a daughter from college in the US. In responding to the media, we have confined ourselves to noting that there has been no specific discussion about travel plans to the US by Erdogan or Gul and that any announcement of same will be made at the appropriate time.

¶16. (c) Comment: We note that there is now widespread speculation that Erdogan may call for early parliamentary elections. Any push for early elections would apparently

have to be made before June 30, when parliament recesses for three months. Getting his US relationship more right ahead of a snap election, if indeed one is planned, could be one reason for pressing for an early June visit to Washington. Post will advise further on Ankara's plans, but notes the Turkish embassy may be in touch directly with the Department and NSC.

Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON